in the country by Indian companies in the private and public sector including the Government organisations; and

(iii) Entrusting the same Independent Body with the responsibility of allocation of new coal and lignite blocks on the basis of a competitive bidding process in which Indian companies in the private and public sector including the nationalised coal companies may participate.

The legislative proposals have not yet been introduced in the Parliament and therefore the process of inviting the competitive bids from the Indian Companies in the private and public sector and allowing foreign investment in the Indian companies for commercial mining of coal and lignite without the existing restriction of captive consumption, have not yet started. The Government have not taken any decision to allow any foreign company to participate in exploration and mining of coal and lignite in the country.

[English]

Protection to Patents

1714. SHRI MAHENDRA SINGH BHATI:
PROF. AJIT KUMAR MEHTA :
SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether a World Trade Organisation Committee on Disputes Settlement Panel has recently concluded in which the committee observed that the protection provided to patents by India was inadequate;

(b) if so, the details of issues discussed and the outcome thereof; and

(c) the reaction of the Union Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) and (b) Under the dispute settlement provisions of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), a panel is currently considering a complaint by the United States of America to the effect that India has not fulfilled its obligations under Article 70.8 and Article 70.9 of the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights which envisage that a WTO Member who does not provide patents protection for pharmaceutical and agricultural chemical products, as on the date of entry into force of the WTO Agreement on 1 January, 1995, shall provide a means by which applications for product patents in those fields of technology can be filed and provide exclusive marketing rights subject to fulfilment of certain conditions. The matter is before the Panel and the final Report of the Panel is awaited.

(c) Does not arise.

Section 139 of Income Tax Act

1715. SHRI AYYANNA PATRUDU :
SHRI N. RAMAKRISHNA REDDY :
SHRI K.P. NAIDU :
SHRI L. RAMANA :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any guidelines have been prepared for filing return of income under section 139 (1) of the Income Tax Act;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether there is wide spread apprehension particularly among the retired salaried class that it may become an instrument of harassment at the hands of income tax officers; and

(d) whether the Government propose to issue instructions for not harassing the people filing returns under Section 139 (1) and make adequate propaganda of the places where Income Tax returns are to be submitted, zone-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A new simplified Return Form (Form No. 2C) has been devised and issued for those who are required to file return of income under the proviso to section 139 (1) of the Income Tax Act. The instructions for filling up the aforementioned Form, which have been attached to the return, interalia, specify who have to file such a return to which cities the new proviso to section 139(1) is applicable, the last date by which the return should be filed and rates of tax. The guidelines also explain the various steps for filling up the return. These instructions have also been published alongwith the return in all major newspapers in the country.

(c) It is not correct that any apprehension exists among the retired salaried class that it may become an instrument of harassment at the hands of income tax officers.

(d) There will be no harassment to persons who file returns under the proviso to section 139(1). Publicity regarding the places where the returns of income-tax are to be filed is being carried out in each city. Special counters have been opened to receive the returns under this provision and to process the return quickly.

[Translation]

Free Trade Zones

1716. SHRIMATI SHEELA GAUTAM :
SHRI RAMESHWAR PATIDAR :

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government propose to set up Free Trade Zones in view of increase in export from Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the time by which these zones are likely to be set up; and